

HEALTH

Healthy Living: Passing on Healthy Habits to Your Kids

Part of your responsibility as a parent is to teach your children how to lead healthy lives now and when they are adults. The best time to start teaching these lessons to children is when they're young, before unhealthy choices become bad habits. When you pass on healthy habits to your kids, it's important to practice what you preach. Just telling your kids what to do won't work—they need to see you choosing healthy behaviors too.

The following are some ways to help your kids avoid unhealthy behaviors:

Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity

Children in the United States are gaining more weight than ever before. They're eating too many high-fat, high-sugar foods and are spending less time being physically active. Weight problems that develop during childhood can lead to weight-related illnesses such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes later in life.

What can you do?

- Pay attention to the kinds of food you buy. Limit the amount of “junk food” your kids eat. Instead, have plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables available. Be aware that even low-fat foods may include unwanted ingredients such as added sugar.
- Serve a variety of healthy foods and use appropriate portion sizes.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of water or milk instead of empty-calorie fruit drinks and soda.
- Limit the amount of time your children spend watching television, using the computer or playing video games.
- Make physical activity part of your family's routine. Take a walk, visit the community pool or go for a bike ride together. Encourage your children to participate in extracurricular activities.

Information to locate walking trails:

1. To learn more about South Carolina trails visit www.sctrails.net/trails/
2. To learn more about South Carolina Parks and Recreation visit www.discoversouthcarolina.com

